

Saturday

Commentary by Bishop Job —

To do no harm means that I will be on guard so that all my actions and even my silence will not add injury to

another of God's children or to any part of God's creation.

Read John 13:34-35

Are you a disciple or a only churchgoer?

What is the most important insight God has shown you this week?

What new thing(s) can you do to express your faith?

A Parting Prayer from Jesus, in Matthew 6:9b-13

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

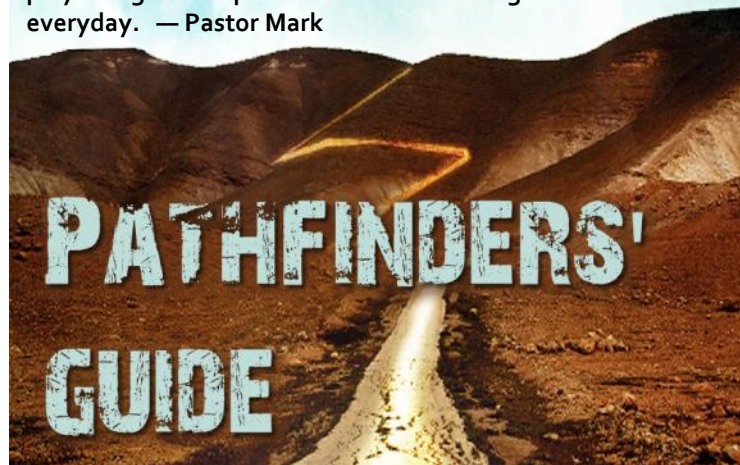
Three Simple Rules—Do No Harm

January 8-14, 2012

I am a lover of Jazz music, all types and kinds. I especially love when Jazz musicians are paired with musicians of other genres to create new improvs on other pieces. I suppose that is what I enjoy most - boundaries of style and structure melded with intuitive musical runs and freedom. For example, I recently watched Wynton Marsalis, director of Jazz at the Lincoln Center, in concert with rock guitarist Eric Clapton. The collaboration was magical between what Clapton does with a guitar, and what Marsalis and his band can do with horns and drums.

Improvisation is the willingness to live within the bounds of the past and yet search for the future at the same time. Improvisation is the desire to make something new out of something old.... It is experienced in being open to letting the people around you...have impact on what you are creating - even if that is the creation of a life lived fully after Jesus. I believe that is how we grow. Boundaries of style and structure, handed down to us as opportunities from the most ancient of church devotional practices, coupled with our own intuition and freedom about what sources we need to dive into, in order to grow. Growth can happen collaboratively with others and it can happen individually working with the Spirit of God. It happens best when we do both. We often need the support and accountability brought to us being surrounded by other Christians. We always need the moments of quiet and individual prayer and reflection to measure ourselves against the truth we are learning. We overcome resistance to changes we know we need to make by allowing others to keep us accountable to the truth we know and the changes we must make. Improvisation - that is what I hope happens to us as we begin and continue on in this new year. I hope we learn to tune our ears to the tones of the Spirit and improvise, dare I say, even improve upon our current walk with God. That is what these beginning Pathfinder Guides, the Adult Education's Text Talk Guides, the sermon series for the next several weeks, and the Wednesday evening Pathway offerings are all about. I pray you take advantage of them with me. If you've not decided to incorporate all of them, at least incorporate one. Come to Wednesday evening class, take the Pathfinder Guide home and use it, talk with your class or small group about utilizing Text Talk. You will be glad you did and the applause of Heaven will be heard in your ears.

See you soon, in the place where His Spirit invites us to play along and be part of what God is doing in the world everyday. — Pastor Mark



Sunday

From John Wesley's General Rules (1743) — *It is expected of all who*

continue therein that they should continue to evidence their idea of salvation, first, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced.

Do you agree that Christians should show evidence of their faith?

Monday

Commentary by Bishop Job — *[The first simple rule] is an act of*

disarming, laying aside our weapons and our desire to do harm. ... When this first step is not taken, it is usually not because it is misunderstood or because it is too simple. More often it is a step not taken because it demands too much in the way of self-discipline, and a very deep faith that God will empower and lead the faithful.

Isn't it enough to be nice to other people? Not kill, not steal, not lie, and so on — everyone should do such behaviors. Is there more to not doing harm? Why would it take God's help?

Tuesday

Commentary by Bishop Job — *A second reason [for not really trying to*

do no harm] ... may be that we have bound ourselves to a certain ideology or theology rather than binding ourselves to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord of all. We may have allowed our loyalty to a theological position to trump our loyalty to Jesus Christ. We may be so sure that "our way" is the right and only way that we cannot even consider that God's way could be different than our own.

Is the Bishop right that we often give more time and attention to our church or our group or strong belief than to following Jesus?

Wednesday

Jesus told many parables about what the kingdom of God (or heaven) is like. In one, the comparison is to a Great Dinner.

Read Luke 14:27-33

Why do people not accept Jesus' invitation to follow him?

Thursday

Paul urged the Galatians to "love one another," instead of living self-indulgently.

Read Galatians 5:13-15

Have you ever done hurt to other people — even unintentionally? Said or did something that was harmful? Wished you could have taken back a word or action?

Friday

Bishop Job quoted the Catholic theologian, Thomas à Kempis

(*The Imitation of Christ*, about 1418):

We cannot trust ourselves too much, because we often lack grace and understanding. The light within us is small, and we soon let even this burn out for lack of care. Moreover, we often fail to notice how inwardly blind we are; for example, we frequently do wrong, and to make matters worse, we make excuses about it! Sometimes we are moved by passion and think it zeal. We condemn small things in others and pass over serious things in ourselves. We are quick enough to feel it when others hurt us — but we do not notice how much we hurt others! A person who honestly examines his own behavior would never judge other people harshly.

Are these "blind spots" similar to the biblical concept of everyone a sinner? Can you recognize any of yours?
